

THE BREVITY OF MAN'S EARTHLY LIFE

March 21, 2007 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

One thing the Bible emphasizes frequently is the brevity of man's earthly life. We need to learn to "redeem the time" (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). The following is a study from the book of Job:

"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7:6). A weaver's shuttle is pulled quickly to and fro across the web, one second it is here and the next it is there. The eye can hardly keep up with it. And the cloth woven by the weaver's shuttle changes continually. Now it is just a few threads, but quickly it becomes a completed piece and is taken from the web and replaced with a new project. We have watched Tibetans weave wool carpets on looms, and even the most complicated rug is finished within days and is taken away, never to be seen again by its weaver. So is man's earthly life.

"my life is wind" (Job 7:7). Nothing is more transitory than the wind. One hour it blows, and the next it is gone. So is man's earthly life.

"As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away" (Job 7:9). Behold the cloud floating across the sky. Watch carefully, because it will not be there for long and even as you watch, it changes form from moment to moment. A cloud of steam rises, is visible for an instant, rejoicing in its brief but raucous existence, then vanishes away. So is man's earthly life.

"our days upon earth are a shadow ... he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 8:9; 14:2). A shadow appears and changes constantly throughout its short life and then disappears. As an amateur photographer I have paid close observation to shadows on many occasions and they are fleeting in the extreme. One moment the light is ideal for taking photos and minutes later everything is thrown into long shadow and then darkness. So is man's earthly life.

"My days are swifter than a post" (Job 9:25). A post refers to a fast courier. "In the wide Persian empire such couriers, on dromedaries or on foot, were employed to carry the royal commands to the distant provinces (Est. 3:15; 8:14)" (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown). The 19th century Pony Express is an example of a post. The young express riders could ride the horses at a gallop mile after mile by changing them at way stations. Thus someone who stood outside the station to enjoy watching the post rider whip his horse across the yard and down the trail would

not be able to enjoy the sight for very long, because the post would soon be out of sight. So is man's earthly life.

"[My days] are passed away as the swift ships..." (Job 9:26). A ship under sail quickly falls from sight over the horizon. The sight of the ship under sail from a landward perspective is brief. When we lived on Whidbey Island I often watched ships, both commercial and military, on their way westward out of Puget Sound toward destinations in the Pacific Ocean, and the sight was very fleeting. So is man's earthly life.

"[My days are] as the eagle that hasteth to the prey" (Job 9:26). We lived for 10 years in Washington state, and I often watched bald eagles there. One moment the eagle is flying in lazy circles and the next it has disappeared from sight, having hastened to the prey. So is man's earthly life.

"He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down" (Job 14:2). Anyone who has maintained a flower garden or kept cut flowers for decoration knows how quickly their beauty fades. The flower opens quickly and comes into its full glory, but soon it begins to wilt and before you know it that once lovely flower has lost all its beauty and is good for nothing but the heap. So is man's earthly life.

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